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Group Therapy: Let Them Eat Duplicates!

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Group Therapy

Let Them Eat Duplicates!

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Florida State University)

Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes? Come to your therapist!
Try <rbazirji@mailers.fsu.edu>

GRYPE

Submitted by **Sonya Foust** (University of Dayton)

Well, it's that time of year again! We are getting many duplicate year end issues of journals. Then next year we will not get all issues due us. Has ANYONE out there solved this problem? Where is the problem, with the publisher? . . . the agent? . . . My process at the

University of Dayton, is to copy both labels and send them to our agent and then wait for the publisher to adjust our expire date. I would appreciate any help anyone can give!!!!

PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Dottie Devereaux**,
Journals Circulation Manager, MIT Press

To prevent the problem of duplicate copies of your subscription, it is very important to provide the publisher with the account number assigned to that subscription. We request on all of our correspondence with agent or customer that they make note of this number and use it when inquiring about the subscription. If this number is not provided, a search for the address has to be done and a match may not be found.

It is also important to keep continuity of the subscription address. We try to enter the subscription address exactly the way the agent or customer has provided it to us. Unfortunately there are sometimes abbreviations. We provide subscriber lists for the order entry staff so they may look up the account number if a match doesn't come up on the search of the computer's database. Some agents use the same purchase order number from year to year. The purchase order number field is searchable and another good way to find the account.

A new procedure that we have implemented over the past year is sending out acknowledgments to as many agents or customers as possible. For customers ordering directly, we are providing a message on the packing slip stating the issues that are included in their subscription. For agents, we send a message if the expiration date differs from what they have provided on the order. This gives the agent or customer the opportunity to correct their records before any more issues are mailed.

As far as "padded" subscription numbers go, most publishers do not want the added expense of processing and sending out duplicate copies. The extra mailing cost, our customer service time, and the through put of our order entry staff are more important factors than showing artificially high circulation numbers.

VENDOR'S RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Laura Ralstin**,
Communications Coordinator, EBSCO
Subscription Services

At the end of every year, we hear complaints from librarians about duplicate issues. In our experience, the problem is greatest with the popular titles handled by the large fulfillment centers. The primary goals of a fulfillment center are to distribute issues to millions of individual subscribers and to help ensure that the publisher meets its circulation quota for advertising purposes. For example, a publisher may guarantee an advertiser that 1.1 million copies of the December issue will be sold. This publisher could face significant penalties in terms of refunds in advertising revenues if the promised number of copies of this issue are not distributed. In order to meet the publisher's commitment to the advertiser, a fulfillment center may start your renewal subscription early in spite of your requested start date. This results in duplicate issues for you. The opposite behavior also applies when a publisher has met its circulation quota — your renewal order may be held until the publisher needs more subscribers to meet a later quota.

Duplicate issues problems can occur with any renewal subscriptions. Library subscriptions make up only about 3% of the total number of subscriptions for popular magazines, and so the whole "duplicates" problem may seem insignificant for these publishers. EBSCO Subscription Services has and will continue to work very hard with publishers and fulfillment agencies to explain the needs of libraries for smooth and uninterrupted delivery. One of the primary things we do as a subscription agency is to work with publishers and fulfillment agencies to determine what information they need and how they can best process the information we send them. EBSCO can include publishers' identifying numbers on orders and we do send our orders in electronic format to reduce errors that occur when orders are manually input by fulfillment agencies.

Notify your subscription agency when a problem arises. Often, including the mailing label will help us to identify the problem. We will work with both you and the publisher to correct the problem as quickly as possible.